Lesson 64 - Stress Management: The Life Science Approach

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1. Introduction

The man was berserk. He drove his car through the front doors of an office building, and then leapt out with a shotgun in his hands. He took aim at the picture of the company president in the building lobby, and shot it full of holes before he was wrestled away by the police.

The man was an ex-employee of the company. He had been fired that morning by the man whose picture he blasted away that afternoon. The man was a victim of stress, and he was reacting in a way that let off the anger, frustration, and helplessness he felt.

Stress—it affects us all, and it can kill us as surely as any illness or disease.

We all experience stress every day of our lives. How we handle stress depends upon our current state of health. If we are healthy, we can manage stressful situations in a positive, productive way. If we are sick, depressed, or simply "out of sorts," then stress can trigger the berserk reaction of the man above, or it can send us into a helpless, destructive state of fear.

Stress, however, can be effectively managed by applying the principles of Life Science and Natural Hygiene in these areas: diet, exercise, relaxation, and sleep.

Before we learn how to deal with stress, we need to recognize it in our own lives. If we can identify stressful situations, we can either learn to avoid them or to handle them so that they do not trigger a more serious and harmful reaction.

2. The Problem Of Stress

2.1 What Is Stress?

Hold a wooden pencil between your hands. Slowly apply pressure as you try to bend the pencil. Increase your pressure, and the pencil snaps and breaks. That's an example of mechanical stress. Stress is simply a pressure or a strain that tends to distort a body—whether it be a pencil or a person.

Up to a point, we can all take pressure and strain. At some time, however, the stress can become so great that just like the pencil, we "snap." If and when we "snap" depends on the ways we handle stressful

situations.

And, to make it more interesting, all stress is not the same. To handle the stress in your life, you need to understand what type of stresses can be made upon you.

2.2 The Types of Stress

Most stress used to be *physical and short-term*. Now in modern times, stress is usually *emotional and long-term*. What does this mean?

All living creatures experience short-term, physical stress almost continuously. Finding food, adapting to weather changes, reproducing, and growth are examples of common, short-term stress situations. As soon as we find our food, or adapt to the season, or reproduce, then the physical stress brought on by these states is eliminated—it was temporary and for a short-term.

This type of stress is normal, natural, and perhaps even beneficial. Without a certain amount of stress, no change, progress, or growth would ever take place. We would be in continuous state of stagnation unless we experienced temporary feelings of stress.

When these stressful situations become long-term, however, then harm results. Also, when the stress becomes more emotional or mental and less physical, we have a harder time of dealing with it. Why? Because the responses to physical stress, such as intense hunger, are already learned. The body has its own way of handling physical stress, and it knows how to best compensate for the temporary demands placed on it.

On the other hand, emotional stress brought about by uncertainties, or feelings of helplessness are difficult to handle. We haven't learned yet how to deal with the type of stress produced by overdue bills or individual shortcomings. And, unlike physical stress, these long-term, stressful emotional states and fears can last for weeks, months, or even years.

2.3 The Effects of Stress

You already know how stress affects you personally, perhaps it makes you feel tired, fatigued, nervous, or depressed. Stress may make you feel as if the weight of the world was on your shoulders. Emotionally, stress may make us prone to anger, irritability, or even tears. No matter how you personally react to stress, however, the physiological effects of stress are the same for all living creatures. What happens to your body when you experience stress?

What are the physiological responses by the body to physical stress:

- An increase in arterial pressure.
- An increased blood flow to the muscles with a decreased blood flow to the organs.
- An increased rate of cellular metabolism throughout the body.
- An increase in blood glucose.
- An increase in glycolysis in the muscles.
- Increased muscular strength.
- Increased mental activity.

The overall effect of these responses is to let you perform far more strenuous physical activity than would otherwise be possible. Why is this? Because if a stressful, threatening, situation is present, then you would probably need to flee from it or fight it. This is called the *fight flight reaction* because an animal in a physically stress-state decides almost instantly to stand and fight or to n and run.

Here's an example of how extreme physical stress can activate the energy reserves of the body: In the national newspapers this week is an account of a 80-year-old grandmother who had been on crutches continuously for the last two years. A fire broke out in her neighbor's house and she heard the cries of a

trapped child. Immediately she ran into the house and carried the child to freedom before she realized she had thrown her crutches aside. She then collapsed and had to be removed by ambulance. During a time of great crisis, or stress, her body responded so vigorously that she forgot she was an invalid.

So far, stress doesn't seem to have that destructive an effect, and it doesn't—if it is *short-term, physical stress*. When stress becomes prolonged and internalized, however, it has decidedly negative results upon the person's health.

2.4 What Is the Stress Reaction?

It is amazing that almost any type of stress can cause the same reaction in the body. Scientists often refer to two kinds of stress: *physical* and *neurogenic*.

An example of physical stress is being exposed to extreme cold. An example of neurogenic stress is the worry that you won't be able to pay your winter heating bill. A vital body can quickly adapt to physical stress. Neurogenic stress, worry or tension, however, may take their toll.

Regardless if the stress is in the body or in the mind, *the same physiological reaction takes place in the body*. The most noticeable effect of any type of stress is a marked increase of hormone secretion in the body.

The hormone known as ACTH (or adrenocorticotropic hormone) is released in large quantities whenever stress is present. This ACTH substance activates the secretion of cortisol. Cortisol, in turn, enhances the production of adrenal androgens in the adrenal cortex. The net effect of all these secretions caused by stress is to provide a sharp and immediate stimulus to the adrenal glands.

The adrenal glands sit right above the kidneys, and control many functions. Perhaps you've heard of athletes or other people speak of the "adrenalin rush." Adrenalin is the most powerful stimulant known. Stress causes adrenalin to be released, and we consequently feel "stimulated." If we are constantly overstimulated by stress, we become burnt-out and incapable of responding to true stress situations.

When some people drive in heavy city traffic or experience other intensely stressful situations, their adrenal glands may actually "ache" or hurt from the constant stimulation being received. An older gentleman who complained of lower backaches while commuting in rush-hour traffic believed he had kidney problems. In reality, his adrenal glands were just being overworked by the stress of commuter traffic.

This is the danger in the stress reaction. You can be under stress or overstimulated almost continuously. No one can run on "high' speed all the time, and the body eventually suffers.

The type of stress that can provoke this adrenal reaction is widely varied. Researchers have discovered, however, that the following situations are sufficiently "stressful" to spark a high ACTH release, which means the body becomes highly stimulated.

2.5 The Types of Stress That Cause Physiological Reactions

1. Intense heat or cold.
2. Injections of any sort.
3. Surgical operations.
4. Trauma of any type (physical or emotional).
5. Pain.
6. Any debilitating body crisis.
7. Emotional outbursts or anxiety attacks.

It seems as if stress is all around us, and its sustained effects can wear us down and make us vulnerable to negative thoughts and poor living habits. But there is hope.

The Life Science program, which is based entirely upon our natural adaptations, provides the correct

basis for living that allows us to withstand stress far better than if we transgress our own biological requirements and nature.

The Life Science approach to stress management, even long-term and emotional stress, is three-fold: *Exercise, Diet, and Relaxation*. These are three of the essentials of health and well-being. Let's see how they help us overcome stress in our daily life.

3. The Life Science Stress-Management Program

3.1 Sweating Away Stress: Exercise!

Exercise is your best friend in combating stress. The value of exercise as a stress reducer is well documented by many researchers. Why should exercise, which is a vigorous activity, have the power to *relax* us and eliminate stress? The answer is this:

Exercise channels the excess energy created by stress into a natural and positive outlet. As you learned earlier, stress causes the sympathetic nervous system to prepare for immediate physical action. The muscles become charged with fuel and the entire metabolism quickens. Unless this excess energy is released through exercise, it can overload and "burn out" the body's nervous system.

If stress becomes habitual and no exercise is taken, then the excess energy is internalized as tension within the muscles. When this occurs, the muscles and tendons themselves shorten and thicken. Excessive connective tissue is deposited, and a general consolidation of all the tissues occur. In other words, holding in the stress and tension has destructive effects on the muscles of the body.

When you exercise vigorously, you dispel this muscular energy in a natural and beneficial way. After all, stress produces the "fight-or-flight" reaction. If we can quite literally "run away" from stress by jogging or other forms of exercise, then we use the energy created by stress in a constructive manner.

A young man of my acquaintance was an aspiring body builder who went away to college. He was afraid that the time demands of college study would mean an end to his body-building program. After a year of school, he returned with an amazing physique. I told him that it certainly looked like college agreed with his exercise routine after all.

He smiled, and said: "You know it's funny. I found out that the best way to get rid of tension and anxiety about my college studies and tests was to lift weights. The more anxious I got about my courses, the better it felt to work out with weights. It helped me burn up nervous energy that would have driven me crazy otherwise."

Exercise does reduce stress and aid relaxation. In his book, *Learn To Relax*, C. Eugene Walker concludes that exercise has the specific ability to reduce anxiety and tension. People on regular exercise programs tend to be more healthy, have better vital capacity, and in general, can cope with life in a more satisfactory way.

Regular exercise not only makes you feel better, but also makes you become more optimistic, and have a better self image. So not only does exercise reduce anxiety, it seems to be a good preventive for developing future fears and stress problems.

Some people have downplayed the importance of exercise in stress reduction. They say that stress is "all in the mind" and the only effective way to combat stress is through mental or emotional avenues. Not

true.

In research conducted by Richard Driscoll, groups of people who were suffering from high anxiety and personal stress were given four types of treatment. One group simply used visual imagery and imagined themselves relaxed, happy, and free from stress. Another group used only exercise. A third group used only physical relaxation techniques, and the last group combined exercise with a positive program of mental optimism.

The group which used exercise in addition to positive thinking had the highest success rate in reducing stress. The groups which did not use exercise programs with their other stress-reducing techniques had a much lower rate of success.

The evidence is in: to reduce stress, you must exercise.

3.2 Stress Management Through Diet

"Sure, I use diet to take care of stress. When I get tense, I just stuff my face!" The young man laughed, but his overweight figure showed the truth behind his joking.

Unfortunately, many people respond to stress by overeating or by indulging in drugs or other destructive habits. To make things worse, the types of foods usually favored under stress—ice cream, candy, soft drinks, coffee, alcohol, junk foods—have the effect of making us more susceptible to stress and illness.

Diet and nutrition play an important role in stress management. By simply avoiding destructive foods and following a wholesome diet, you can withstand normal stressful situations in a cheerful and optimistic fashion. A junk food diet, on the other hand, can make us crumble under the slightest bit of tension. Why is this?

3.3 How Diet Affects the Stress Response

A strong and healthy nervous system is our first defense line against stress. Good nerves and a steady disposition allow you to shake away stress and handle tension effectively. Although many factors ensure a healthy nervous system, most nutritionists believe that B vitamins play the vital role in good nerve health.

If you follow the natural Life Science diet of fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and sprouts, you will have a super abundance of all needed nutrients—including B vitamins as well as important minerals and trace elements that build strong nerves.

On the other hand, junk foods, refined sugars and starches, processed foods, nonfoods like alcohol and coffee, and many of the other substandard foods commonly eaten deplete the body of B vitamins during the metabolism of these foods. These types of foods are nutrient destroyers. In this case, the nutrients being destroyed and depleted by junk foods are the exact same nutrients that your body needs to withstand stress.

Perhaps now you can see how the stress junk food cycle gets started. A person feels stressed and insecure; he or she then reaches for a sugary "reward" food, such as ice cream or candy. After the food is eaten, additional B vitamins and other nutrients are depleted. This nutrient loss predisposes the nervous system to more stress attacks, and more junk food is eaten, and so on.

Why do people use food as a refuge from stress? First of food is a very reassuring substance. Our earliest memory of security go back to being fed by our mother. Feeding or eating, then represents a way back to security.

Food or digestion, is also used to deaden the feelings of stress.When the body is loaded down with a mess of food to digest, the mind becomes cloudy, dull, and desensitized. Food is used as a drug to obliterate feelings of tension, obsession, despondency, or stress.

Eating while under stress is actually one of the worst things you can do. Under any type of stress—physical or mental—the digestive faculties are inhibited and digestion ways suspended. What this means is that if you eat when suffering from stress, indigestion will surely result.

A favorite quote from Dr. Herbert M. Shelton is: "Whenever you are uncomfortable in body or mind, skip the next meal." If you ever suffer from feelings of stress or fear, resist the temptation to eat. Fast for awhile. A short fast will do much to dispel feelings of delusion, insecurity, and stress. At the same time, the fast allows the body to rebuild itself and strengthen the nervous system. The result of proper diet and occasional fasting is you receive immediate "stress relief".

The wholesome Life Science diet provides all the nutrients we need to build body and mind that can cope with stress. No foods are included which disrupt the body's balance or deplete the vital nutrients that we need to withstand stress. A proper diet, coupled with exercise can be your best partner in stress management. But there is another important factor in effective stress mangement, and that is: relaxation.

3.4 Relaxation

Rest, sleep, relaxation, poise, equanimity—whatever want to call it—is absolutely essential to the continued health of the organism. In fact, the opposite of stress is recreation. Every muscle, cell, and portion of the body is in a continually alternating state of stress and relaxation. s long as we alternate periods of stress with periods of relaxation, then all is fine. At times, however, stress gets upper hand and relaxation—true and total rest—never occurs, even while asleep.

A young woman who had just accepted a top executive position with one of the nation's leading banks was sitting in a dentist's chair. She had a strange problem, but one this dentist had already seen in dozens of his patients: When she was asleep at night, the woman ground her teeth continually. She had so much tension and was going through so much stress with her new job that she actually ground her teeth down through a gold crown covering, and now grinding away at the tooth underneath.

"It's a common problem of the last ten years," the dentist told me. "People have so much stress in their daily lives that the only way they can release it is by grinding their teeth in their sleep. Some patients have to wear plastic in their mouth when they go to bed so they won't grind the teeth down to the bone."

Just because you get seven or eight hours of sleep does not mean that you are getting adequate rest and relaxation. No, relaxation is different from sleep and strangely enough, you may have to *learn* how to relax in order to offset stress.

Dr. Herbert M. Shelton wrote in his book *Human Beauty: Its Culture and Hygiene*: "Worry, strain, and stress exhaust the nervous system more rapidly than physical activity, producing such danger signals as tension, irritability, and a tendency to worry over trifles. If we neglect the necessity for adequate relaxation and repose, we have no chance to replenish our energies or repair our worn tissues."

Dr. Shelton then concludes that "relaxation is an essential condition of continued healthy existence. Without it, the most vital and necessary processes of life are not carried on or they are conducted with much lowered efficiency."

But how can we relax if we are feeling stress? The trick is to relax *before* stress develops and tension sets in. After all, doesn't it make more sense to use relaxation as a preventive treatment for stress instead of as a "curative?"

Just like regular exercise and a sustained good diet, relaxation and rest should be a normal daily activity that you engage in—whether you need it or not! Modern life can sometimes fool us that we have no time or no need to relax. We feel that we can handle anything, and we take on more projects, more work, and more responsibility. Eventually, the body that has been continually deprived of rest, and relaxation will rebel, and illness may result.

Rest and relaxation must become a daily part of your activities. Give up an hour a day to constructive

rest and contemplation. You may engage in some restful hobby or activity that makes no mental or physical demands. You may take a walk by yourself or listen to some music. There are many ways to relax, but don't fool yourself that you are relaxing when actually you are just doing some other type of work or watching television.

Many people are worried about the "right" way to relax. Some people have been told that meditation is essential, and others believe that relaxation can only come by taking some course or by reading a book.

As far as stress reduction goes, it makes absolutely *no* difference which relaxation method you use. The important thing is that the relaxation be total: both body and mind must be free from tension and stress.

3.5 Relaxing the Mind

Much stress and tension is in the mind, but as we saw, that does not make it any less "real." The mind can also be relaxed in a manner similar to the body. First of all, the mind must be used constructively —"exercised" if you will. Mental laziness breeds anxiety and a lack of self-worth. These feelings lead to stress.

If you diligently apply your mind to new tasks and learning, it will be more eager to relax and let go of the petty worries that sometimes occupy the thoughts.

Along with working or exercising the mind, you must give it time to relax, wonder, and dream. Daydreaming is not bad at all, if it doesn't interfere with our daily lives. Giving the mind free reign to explore and visualize can do much to dispel the mundane worries that can dominate our thoughts.

Listening to fine music, painting, reading inspiring books, and just quietly sitting in contemplation are excellent mind relaxers. Whichever way is best suited for your temperament, find a way to relax your mind and leave your worries behind for at least a small time every single day.

Simply relaxing and "doing nothing" may be very hard at first, but if you give yourself the scheduled time to do it every day, you will eventually look forward eagerly to your "relaxation period."

3.6 A Case History

The man before me should have been at the prime of his life. Forty-five years old, the man had started his own computer company three years ago and was now earning over a hundred thousand dollars a year. Yet he looked distinctly unhappy.

I can't enjoy life anymore. Food I eat doesn't agree with my acid stomach. I worry I'm getting ulcers. After a day of work and dealing with problems, I don't want to even talk to my wife—much less make love to her. I've got everything I want except peace of mind, so I guess I really don't have much at all." The man folded and unfolded a piece of paper in his lap. His hands shook, and he couldn't meet my eyes.

After talking some more, I discovered that his diet was typical for business executives: a breakfast of coffee and orange juice and toast, a fast-food lunch, and a supper of beef and potatoes. His only exercise was taking his sailboat to the lake on summer weekends, and he had no other interests outside of his work.

The first thing we worked on was his diet. He wasn't about to give up meat or some of his "favorite" foods, but he did agree to practice the rules of food combining. He lived about a-mile-and-a-half from his office, and he decided that he would walk there and back at least three times a week, weather permitting. Finally, he renewed an old interest in music, and told me that he was going to start practicing on the piano he had bought for his children.

Two months passed. I met the man again, and noticed his relaxed and smiling expression. "No more ulcers or acid stomach" he told me. "I don't know if I believe that food combining stuff or not, but something sure worked on that diet. And I also realized how much I missed being outside as I walked to

my office. Now I'm riding a bicycle to and from work about every day."

And his new hobby? "Ah yes, music. It sure is soothing my savage beast after a day of work. I gave up on the piano," he confided, "but I got an excellent classical music library now, and I'm taking a music appreciation course."

It all seemed so simple. Just a consciousness about the diet, minimal daily exercise, and a relaxing outside interest were all that was needed to turn the man's stress-filled life around. The Life Science approach to stress management is simple. Only a small amount of commitment and personal effort is required. And the reward? The greatest of all—a stress-free, healthy, happy, and productive life.

4. Questions & Answers

What are the early warning signs of stress?

> Irritability and fatigue. If you continually feel tired or short-tempered, then you are experiencing stress. If small annoyances make you angry, or if you become upset for no apparent reason, then you are experiencing stress. In other words, if you even suspect you are under stress, then you most certainly probably are. Stress can "sneak" up on you. Often, people brush aside the early warning signs of stress and continue to push themselves on. Finally, the demands made by stressful situations become so great that the body becomes ill at ease, or "diseased."
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> The final outcome of stress is a breakdown of the healthy functioning of the body. Be very sensitive to emotional changes and your reactions to your job, family, and surroundings. These types of things can warn us when the stress load is becoming too great.

Can we "eat" stress away? I mean, is a good diet the main thing you need to avoid stress?

> Unless you are following a good diet and a regular exercise regimen and a satisfying relaxation program, then you will be adversely affected by stress. Without an excellent diet, however, all the exercise and relaxation in the world will not overcome stress. Until you are well-established on the optimum Life Science diet, then at least make sure that none of the "stress-promoting" foods, such as junk foods, white sugar, white flour, alcohol, and caffeine, are forever eliminated
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> You cannot, however, "eat" away stress, "run" away stress, or "sleep away stress. You must combine all three, along with a positive and cheerful mental outlook, to curtail the harmful effects of stress.

Stress can often come about because of changes in your lifestyle—like getting a new job, moving, becoming married, death of a spouse, and so on. In light of this, wouldn't it be ill-advised for a person suffering from stress to make the types of changes in diet and exercise as you propose?

> Most stress that comes from changes in our lifestyle comes about because these changes were made for us. In other words, stress usually arises because we perceive ourselves as "helpless" in face of these changes
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> Now, if we make positive changes in our life, as a result of a conscious decision, then we

feel that we are in charge of our lives. We no longer feel helpless. We assume control of our destinies. This is one of the greatest values of the Life Science Stress-Management Program. It consists entirely of positive steps that may be undertaken by anyone at any point in their lives

Not only will these changes reduce stress, they will also increase our overall level of health. If you feel overwhelmed by stress in your life, immediately take a positive, constructive step to improving your life. Start an exercise program. Give yourself a time and place to relax. Improve your diet. As soon as you decide to do one or more of these things, you will immediately lower your stress level. Try it. It works!

If stress is not properly managed, illness, disease, depression, and despondency may result. Because of the many mental and emotional demands made upon us by modern life, all of us are susceptible to stress and its negative effects

The best defense against stress is a healthy lifestyle and positive outlook on life. The requirements for effective stress management, are basically the same, as those for health and well-being: a sensible exercise program, wholesome and natural diet, and regular relaxation.

Article #1: Stress/Unstress by Ken Pelletier, Ph.D.

No one can achieve optimum health so long as they allow stress to dominate their lives. Much of peoples' physical sickness is a result of allowing the autonomic nervous system to get out of control.

Yogis and meditators learn to control their pulse, brain waves, blood pressure, heart rate, skin conductance, muscle tension, peripheral circulation, and respiratory pattern and rate. The subjects' patterns are very coherent—when one goes up they all go up. When one goes down, they all go down.

There are two kinds of stress: short-term and long-term. The short-term we can take. That's the kind we share with every other biological organism. We react in a certain way when we're in a threatening situation.

When there is a long-term stress such as money difficulties, family stress, job stress, emotional conflicts, all bodily functions accelerate as though your life was in danger, and they stay elevated, without release. They continue at a rate of high excitation. This is the kind of biological stress pattern that leads to disease, heart attack or stroke.

Yogis learn to let go of these excess levels and simply quiet themselves down.

You can think of your bodies as being naive. They can't tell if your life is really in danger, or if you're just thinking as if your life is in danger. The fear of losing your job might feel just as threatening as if a speeding truck were coming at you. You might react this way to a nagging creditor or to your income tax coming due.

In someone with a real chronic stress pattern, one thing that may break the cycle is a serious problem or illness such as a nervous breakdown, a heart attack, a stroke, a debilitating headache, or one of any number of such things. During or after a serious illness, a very different set of demands is placed upon you. It's now okay to stay in bed and take it easy.

The same stress that may produce a heart attack in one person might produce only a headache in another. Certain families, both genetically and behaviorally, will predispose to certain illnesses. Your environment will predispose you one way or another. So will your lifestyle.

The most exciting thing about research work in the field of thinking is that once people get moving in the direction of health, they don't want to stop at just being "normal." They keep going toward becoming healthier than the average.

The main ways to break the chronic stress pattern are stress management, diet, and exercise. Exercise breaks up both physical and mental tension.

The physiological effects of light exercise for high blood pressure are comparable if not greater than those brought about by drugs. The information is in medical literature but is not taught in medical schools. How often does a doctor put a hypertensive patient on an exercise program?

Post heart attack victims often undergo a conceptual shift in thinking, so that afterward, things that were considered highly stressful are no longer perceived as so potentially perilous. This process is something like, "I just looked at all the things that used to bug me, and I said to heck with it."

This is the change all patients should strive to produce in themselves—to learn to decide whether a given event is life-threatening or not.

It's a mistake then, to think that all stress is bad. There are times when the stimulus of stress can save your life. The error comes in when you start interpreting relatively nonthreatening situations—like balancing your checkbook or dealing with a certain person—as though they were life threatening. Then you are creating the crisis in that life event. All the same responses take place as if a car was coming at you at 80 miles per hour.

You can achieve the conceptual shift in any number of ways, one of which is the painful, involuntary way through severe illness that forces you to look at your values. Illness can be a very creative experience—a potential source of regeneration and renewal instead of just a breakdown.

There are many symptoms before actual illness strikes. You're being told that you've pushed yourself beyond a level of healthy functioning. Too many people miss the early signals and get the opportunity to examine their lives—perhaps for the first time—at the cost of a serious illness.

Many people recognize a physical symptom and instead of realizing this calls for a change to correct it, they say, "This is something to worry about." This further adds anxiety, and gets them deeper into a chronic stress cycle. You can run from a snarling dog and be attacked or stand your ground, stay relaxed, and relate to the dog.

What can people do to minimize the feeling of stress in their lives? Any activity that you have in your life can be used as a meditation. Prayer, walking, sex, running, singing, listening to Bach—it can be anything. An activity that you invest with prolonged and focused attention can be a form of meditation.

Self care is paying attention to a beneficial way of living your life so that your exchanges and interactions with other people are loving and caring, and your attitudes toward yourself are that way, too. People come to meditation by very different roads. For some people, paying attention to nutrition leads to paying attention to other areas of their lives. Others come at it through exercise.

They realize they can't even run around the block if they're feeling tense, and they get interested in meditation. Another might start meditating and become conscious of being overweight. Meditation leads to self-discovery and self-care.

Pay attention. The unexamined life is the unlived life. Invest your life with attention. Henry James said, "Try to be someone to whom nothing is lost."

All the things we do to ourselves by eating a nonoptimal diet make us more susceptible to specific disorders so try decreasing your intake of refined sugars which are uniformly destructive; decreasing your fat consumption; diversifying your protein base away from meat into non-meat sources of protein;

and eating more fresh fruits and vegetables.

People who have a slight to extreme overweight problem eat as a form of tranquilization. That relaxed feeling after a large meal is something they seek again and again.

You can get this same feeling from meditating or running several miles a day and this changes your perspective on food. But remember—all things should be fun. Too many people are so *dour*. They're going to become healthy if it kills them.

If you drive yourself to do anything, you're sunk. There must be a spark, an element of vitality, of discovery, that makes it really exciting. You've got to follow the little messages from inside that tell you what's right for you, no matter what any expert says.

Article #2: In Search Of Emotional Well-Being

Mental and emotional well-being is conditioned by far more influences and factors than physical well-being. While physical well-being arises from meeting the physical needs of the body correctly, this is not always enough to assure mental and emotional serenity.

In ascertaining the conditions necessary in achieving mental well-being, we must consider more than the requisites of physical health. We must take into account those elements in our ecosystem that promote mental and emotional health and, likewise, those factors and influences which undermine it.

There are many who assure us that we are responsible for how we feel and act, that we are the architects of our feelings and moods. We can control the factors that affect us or at least so rationalize our attitudes in response to external factors that we are not adversely affected.

Those who are under emotional control are said to be poised: calm, cool, and collected. They respond rationally.

Individuals who do not have strong emotional reactions to stimuli and phenomena, be it adverse or favorable, are rare. Most of us react to unexpected conditions in an involved rather than in a detached manner. This is how almost all creatures of nature react to abnormal situations or extraordinary circumstances.

If there are very few humans who can view affairs in objective fashion, there are fewer nonhumans that have this capability—perhaps porpoises (dolphins) and whales. Where there are immediate and dire threats that require timely action, even the most poised may forego their usual detachment and objectiveness.

In Natural Hygiene/Life Science we teach that every effect is the result of foregoing causes. Hence we need to explore causes—causes over which we can exert control and causes which are beyond our control—in order to improve our mental and emotional condition. Essentially we all seek mental equilibrium, poise, or stability within the context of our respective lives. Within this setting we have certain desires and expectations. Thus we become disturbed and upset when something we expect or want appears to be or is denied to us.

Whatever the causes of depression, all are within the province of our control. We can take several steps to fulfill most of the requirements necessary to live a joyous life.

Some significant areas in which we can exercise control of our emotional and mental well-being are:

1. *Our health regime.* We can adopt and closely observe our biological requirements. Though we may be subject to many of the stresses modern society imposes upon us, we will fare far better if the basics of life are correct. The Life Science/Natural Hygiene program is scientifically correct, for it is based squarely upon our natural adaptations. It is within our province to decide to live healthfully and to pursue it diligently.
2. *Our thoughts*. We can think constructive thoughts instead of destructive ones. If we harbor animosities or the disapproval of others, we injure our minds. We must psyche ourselves into thoughts that are optimistic and positive in nature, and quash our thoughts that are negative in nature. It is said, "As you thinketh, so shall you be." By focusing your thoughts and reflections upon yourself and your relationships with the world, and directing your attention to how you can improve yourself and your interaction with others, you'll be laying the foundation for mastering your own destiny and happiness. Should you feel defeated or depressed, despondent or in despair, you can refuse to indulge in those thoughts that perpetrate these mental states.
3. *Accept the world as it is*. Accept and adapt to changes and look upon them as challenges rather than trying to resist them.

When we are in rapport with the world, we can take advantage of events and conditions rather than lose out by resisting them. In doing so, we create a positive influence on *ouselves* and those around us. We must be committed to what we believe but we must be *realists* and know what we can and cannot do.

We must, finally, address ourselves *honestly* to the limit of our reach. Each personality has its limits—to extend ourselves beyond our capabilities will only lead to self-pressure and our bodies will automatically become stressful. And that mental serenity will escape us.